

UNDERSTANDING THE FOUNDATION FUNDING LANDSCAPE

Foundations are mission-driven organizations that fund programs working to solve the biggest issues facing our world today. In 2017, the nation's **110,000** private philanthropic foundations contributed over **\$66.9** billion to nonprofits.¹ Despite record levels of giving, foundation grants made up only **15%** of total charitable gifts. Additionally, just under **15%** of foundation grants supported educational institutions.

Keep this data in mind when considering whether or not to apply for foundation funding. In many cases, you will be competing for funds against multiple health, arts and social service organizations. Foundations rarely have enough capacity to fund all of the organizations seeking their support.

The Foundation Relations team can help maximize your chance of success by identifying and cultivating relationships with foundations interested in your research or program.

CRAFTING AN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The executive summary can help introduce your important work to potential donors. It is a crucial element of your grant application since it is designed to provide funders an effective “elevator pitch” of your project. Written in a straightforward way, executive summaries should leave the reader wanting to learn more.

Executive summaries contain four brief sections and should not exceed one (1) page in length:

The Problem: An opening statement will succinctly state the problem your team has identified and which will be addressed by your project.

The Opportunity: Next, a short description of the solution you are proposing must be presented. This section must briefly address what the project will do, how, where and for whom.

The Support: The reader will next want to know how much money you are seeking for the project. Any additional information on the life of the grant and how the project may go on beyond that period will be extremely helpful.

The Team: A concise description of your team, department, school or office – complete with its history, purpose and a depiction of its activities – within the University will close this component.

The Foundation Relations team can work with you to develop and perfect your executive summary. Once it's ready, our team can send it to foundation program officers on your behalf.

Ready to get started? Contact us today. The foundation relations team can provide an executive summary template and samples upon request.

¹ 2017 Annual Report on Grant Making by Foundation Source

WRITING A GRANT PROPOSAL

Depending on the needs of the foundation, grant proposals can range from simple, one-page project overviews to detailed narratives with specific questions and word limits. Be sure to check the requirements (and deadlines) for each foundation before you begin to develop your grant proposal. Contact the Foundation Relations team if you have any questions about application instructions. We are here to help!

The proposal is your best opportunity to build a compelling case for support. Keep these quick tips in mind as you write application:

1. **Show the Need:** Foundations can receive hundreds – or even thousands – of applications for every open funding opportunity. What sets your work apart from other applicants? Clearly identify the problem you are trying to solve, and back it up with research from reputable sources.
2. **Demonstrate Impact:** Foundations are particularly interested in understanding the results of your project. What do you hope to achieve with their philanthropic support? Whenever possible, include both desired anticipated outcomes (what knowledge or behavior changed as a result of your work) and outputs (number of people served).
3. **Tell A Story:** If your project will directly impact students or community members, look for ways to incorporate their stories in your proposal. Include direct quotes, testimonials or pictures if appropriate.
4. **Be Specific:** Use clear, specific language and firm numbers and dates to describe your project. For example: Instead of saying your project will support many students with scholarships, tell the donor that you will award \$1,000 scholarships to 50 low-income STEM majors during the 2019-20 academic year.
5. **Avoid Jargon:** As an expert in your field, it can be easy to slip specialized terms or acronyms in your proposal without realizing it. Unless otherwise instructed, try to write for a general audience totally unfamiliar with your field.

Are you new to proposal writing? Consider watching this quick introductory proposal writing webinar on [Grantspace by Candid](#) or reviewing LinkedIn Learning's [Grant Writing for Education](#) course. The Foundation Relations team can also help you navigate with proposal writing and editing on a case-by-case basis.

DEVELOPING A PROJECT BUDGET

Before you request a grant from a foundation, you should be prepared to answer the following financial questions:

- What is your total project budget?
- How much funding are you requesting?
- How will you spend a grant should you receive it?
- What organizations will cover the other costs associated with your project?

Budgets can be as simple as stating the total cost of a project or highly detailed, depending on the project and the funder's requirements. Some funders provide budget templates outlining the information they want to see in a specific format. This is particularly true of research proposals, which often include itemized budgets and a budget justification (explanatory narrative) for how the funds will be used. Other corporate and foundation funders leave formatting to the discretion of the grant writer.

Note that some foundations prefer not to fund certain expenses (staff salaries or administrative costs, for example). It's important to take these restrictions under consideration when developing your project budget. Although there are exceptions, foundations typically prefer not to fund entire project budgets.

Download our [zero-balanced program budget template](#).

ACCEPTING YOUR AWARD

Before distributing funds, foundations typically require a signed grant agreement outlining the conditions of the award. Agreements usually include:

- Any restrictions on how the grantee can spend its award
- The timeline during which the funds must be spent
- A disbursement schedule explaining when payments will be made
- Requirements and deadlines for any grant reports

The Foundation Relations team reviews all grant contracts, and can help you secure signatures from the necessary University officials. We can also work with your school or center's financial officer to establish a cost center number for fund disbursement.

Have you received a grant award? [Contact us today](#).

SUBMITTING A GRANT REPORT

Our work doesn't end when we receive a check from a foundation. The grant report is a crucial initial stewardship piece for creating positive and long-lasting relationships with foundation donors.

To ensure a quality report:

- Review the grant agreement that comes with your award
- Keep a detailed account of how you spend all grant funds
- Carefully track all of the outcome measures mentioned in the original grant proposal
- If possible, collect quotes or testimonials from individuals impacted by your project
- Make note of anything you would change or improve if you were to pursue the same project again

If we worked with you to submit the proposal, our team will notify you at least 30 days before your report is due back to the foundation.

CONTACT US

If you have any questions, please visit the [UT Dallas Foundation Relations website](#) or contact:



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